programmes and the incentives/prospects available in these Forces. The Recruitment Boards have also been advised to send special information to the minorty community run institutions/organisations with a request to encourage candidates from these communities to apply for the recruitment in the Central Para-Military Forces.

Welfare of senior citizens

1367. SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the programmes formulated and enforced for promoting welfare of the senior citizens indicating the welfare schemes;

(b) the problems, as identified by Government and the State Governments being faced by the senior citizens;

(c) the agencies/organizations connected with the welfare of senior citizens; and

(d) the concessions and benefits enjoyed by the senior citizens?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI NAGMANI): (a) The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowernment is implementing two grant-in-aid schemes for the welfare of the older persons. The details of these two schemes are as under:

I. Integrated Programme for older persons (Plan Scheme): Under this scheme, financial assistance is provided on receipt of the recommendation of the State Govts./UT administrations to the Non Governmental Organisations for setting up and continuance of Old Age Homes, Day Care Centres and Mobile Medicare Units as well as for supporting non-institutional services for the aged.

II. Assistance to Panchayati Raj Institutions/Voluntary Organisations/Self Help Groups for Construction of old age homes/Multi service centres for Older persons (Non Plan Scheme): This Central Non Plan Scheme aims at providing one time financial grant for construction of old age homes or services centres for older persons.

(b) The older persons face a number of problems ranging from absence of ensured and sufficient income to support themselves and their dependents, to ill-health, to absence of social security, to loss of a social role and recognition, to non-availability of opportunities for creative use of free time, nutrition, shelter, education, welfare and protection of life and property etc.

(c) Details of the Ministries/Department concerned with the welfare of senior citizens are given in the enclosed Statement-I (*See* below).

(d) A statement showing the concessions/benefits extended for the welfare of senior citizens by the different Ministries/Department concerned is given in the enclosed Statement-II.

Statement-I

List of Ministries /Departments concerned with the welfare of senior citizens

1. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
2. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
3. Ministry of Finance
4. Ministry of Rural Development
5. Ministry of Urban Development
6. Ministry of Human Resources Development
7. Ministry of Labour
8. Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
9. Ministry of Law & Justice
10. Ministry of Home Affairs
11. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
12. Ministry of Communications
13. Ministry of Railways
14. Ministry of Surface Transport
15. Ministry of Civil Aviation
16. Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs

Statement-II

List of Concessions and Facilities given to older persons by different Ministries/Departments of the Government

Sl. No.	Name of the Ministry/Department	Facilities/Benefits given to Senior Citizens
1	2	3
1.	Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment	(1) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is the nodal Ministry responsible for welfare of the Senior Citizens. It has announced the National Policy on Older Persons that seeks to assure older persons that their concerns are National concerns and they will not live unprotected, ignored and marginalized. The National Policy aims to strengthen their legitimate place in the Society and to help older people to live the last phase of their life with purpose. dignity and peace. The National Policy on Older Persons *inter alia* visualizes support for financial security, health, care nutrition, shelter, emphasis upon education, training and information needs, provisions of appropriate concessions, rebates and discounts etc. to Senior Citizens and special attention to protect and strengthen their legal rights such as to safeguard their life and property. The National Policy on Older Persons recognises of senior citizens to a person who has attained the age of 60 years. (2) The Ministry has also written to all the Ministries/States Government concerned for adopting a uniform age of 60 years for conferring the status of senior citizen to a person and for extending facilities/ concessions to them (copy at Annexure I).

1	2	3
		(3) The Ministry is also implementing following schemes for the benefit of Senior Citizens: (a) The Scheme of Assistance to Panchyati Raj Institutions/Voluntary Organisations/Self Help Groups for Construction of Old Age Homes/multi-service centre for older persons. Under this Scheme, one time construction grant for old age home/multi-service centre is provided. (b) In Integrated Programme for Older Persons has been formulated by revising the earlier scheme of "Assistance to Voluntary Organisations for Programmes relating to the Welfare of the Aged". Under this Scheme, financial assistance upto 90% of the project cost is provided to NGOs for establishing and maintaining old age homes, day care centre, mobile medicare units and to provide non-institutional services to older persons.
2.	Ministry of Rural Development	(1) Under the National Old age Pension Scheme, Central Assistance of Rs. 75/ p.m. is granted to destitute older persons above 65 years. This Scheme has been transferred to the State Plan w.e.f. 2002-03. (2) Under the Annapurna Scheme, free food grain (wheat or rice) upto 10Kg. Per month are provided to destitute older persons of 65 years of above, who are otherwise eligible for old age pension but are not receiving it. However, the scheme has been transferred to the State Sectors w.e.f. 2002-2003.

1	2	3
3.	Ministry of Finance	1. Section 88 of Finance Act, 1992, provides income tax rebate of upto Rs. 15,000 or actual tax which ever is less to senior citizens who have attained the age of 65 years at any time during the relevant previous year. This has been revised to Rs.20,000 in the budget for 2003-04. As a result, their income upto Rs. 1.53 lakhs will henceforth become fully exempt from incme tax. Hence, effective exemption limit may hereafter be actually higher and is Rs. 1.83 lakh due to standard deduction. They can get further relief by taking advantage through tax rebate under section 88. 2. For Senior Citizens, the deduction in respect of medical insurance permia is upto Rs. 15,000/- under Section 80D. 3. RBI has permitted higher rates of interest on saving schemes of Senior Citizens (persons having the age 65 years and above). Accordingly, w.e.f. 15.05.01 banks permitted 0.5 per cent higher rate of interest on fixed deposits of Senior Citizens aged between 60 to 65 years & 1% higher rate of interest to Senior Citizens above 65 years of age. 4. LIC has launched a special pension policy called Varishta Pension Birna Yojana guaranteeing on annual return of 9% in the form of monthly pension scheme to senior citizens aged 55 years and above.
4.	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways	Ministry of Road Transport and Highway has informed that a decision has been taken regarding reservation of two seats for senior citizens in front row of the buses of the State Road Transport Undertakings.

1	2	3
5.	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, on request from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, has issued instructions to all State Governments to provide for separate queues for older in hospitals for registration and clinical examination.
6.	Ministry of Railways	(a) Indian Railways provide 30% concession in all the Mail/Express including Rajdhani/ Shatabadi/Jan Shatabadi trains for senior citizens aged 60 years and above. (b) Indian Railways also have the facility of separate counters for Senior Citizens for purchase /booking/cancellation of tickets.
7.	Ministry of Civil Aviation	1. Indian Airlines is providing 50 per cent Senior Citizens Discount on Normal Economy class fare for all domestic flights to Indian senior citizens who have completed the age of 65 years in the case of male senior citizens and 63 years in the case of female senior citizens subject to certain conditions. 2. Jet Airways is providing 50 per cent discount on basic fare for all domestic flights in Economy Class to senior citizens having the age of 65 years (male and female). 3. Sahara India Airlines is providing 50 per cent discount on basic fare for all domestic flights in Economy Class to senior citizens having the age of 62 years (men and women).
8.	Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution	Cabinet has on 5.6.2003 issued necessary guidelines to extend the coverage of the Antyoday Scheme, under which food is provided to destitute old, to cover an additional 50 lakh Below Poverty Line families including 60+population.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9.	MCD, Delhi		MCD, Delhi, has opened a separate a counter for senior citizens for submission of property tax.				
10.	Miscellaneous		1. Telephone connnection is given on priority to senior citizens of age 65 years and above by the Ministry of Communications.				
			2. On the request of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India has advised Chief Justices of all High Courts in the country to accord priority to cases involving older persons and ensure their expeditious disposals.				

Conditions of children homes

1368. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWEMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that in the absence of a centralized system among the social welfare departments of the States and Union Territories to trace families of children residing in children homes in Delhi and other States, these children homes are bursting at seams and also lack basic facilities, thus defeating the very purpose of having congenial atmosphere for development of such unfortunate children; and

(b) if so, whether Government are thinking of issuing any guidelines to be followed by the States so that overall conditions of childrens homes could be gradually improved over a period of time?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI NAGMANI): (a) and (b) The State Governments/Union Territory Administrations have responsibility of providing for management of children homes and repatriating the children back to their families in coordination with other States Government/Union Territory Administrations concerned. The repatriation is sought to be carried out by State Government through their various Departments with the cooperation of voluntary organizations working in the area. Government of India